Jaunts WITH JAMIE

Globe Trotting In Milwaukee

AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, here in Wisconsin is a large group of men and a few women, who sit in their armchairs at home and take jaunts all over the world. By short wave radio telephone and/or "CW" — dots and dashes — they visit with friends in Australia, England, South Africa, Egypt, Hawaii, South America and remote parts of the world.

This group is, of course, the radio amateurs, better known as "hams." They resent this latter term, but seem to be stuck with it as no one has yet come up with an acceptable substitute.

In round numbers there are 90,000 radio amateurs in the United States, each with his own private, government licensed sending station. The 90,000 are twice the number of radio amateurs in the rest of the countries of the world.

The amateurs' interest in radio began back in the pre-professional days when, in 1903, Marconi startled the scientific world by transmitting the letter "S" across the Atlantic Ocean "without wires."

The term "amateur" designates a group, rather than "scientific ability," for many hams know just about all that is currently known of radio.

* * *

ONE MILWAUKEE AMATEUR, for example, Ellis Saxton, 709 E. Sylvan Av., call letters W 9 UMX, believes that much of today's television advancement is due to the amateur. And he can prove it.

Another Milwaukee amateur, Jim Ott, 4244 N. Wilson Dr., W 9 LCD, has built his own television transmitter and from his "radio shack" upstairs, can transmit pictures to his TV set downstairs.

During World War II, 25,000 American radio amateurs were in uniform. They designed military communications equipment, set up a global network of radio navigational aids in the Army Communications System, manned radar installations, were instructors, etc. Conversely, many an amateur got the "bug" from his Army radio-electronics training.

Fred E. Ebel, public relations director of Harley-Davidson Motor Co., from whom we got the information for this piece, was a radio-electronics instructor at Truax Field, Madison, during the last war.

Fred is an avid amateur. There is no other kind. One of the happiest moments of his life was when two-way radios were installed on police motorcycles. Not that he had anything to do with it, but it brought his vocation and his avocation together.

* * *

RADIO AMATEURS ARE IN LOVE WITH THEIR HOBBY. Some are the "experimental" type and enjoy tearing down their sets and rebuilding them nearer to their heart's desire. Their conversation with other amateurs is limited to discussing technical improvements.

Another type is the "DX (distance) hound." He's the "dial spinner," who goes big game hunting every night for new and across-the-ocean hams. His pleasure is in logging the greatest number of foreign stations.

Then there's the "ragchewer." He just likes to talk. Sometimes when the "ragchewers" don't feel like "firing up" their transmitters they just listen to the QSOs (conversations) on the amateur networks.

This eavesdropping is called "reading the mail." Favorite "mail" includes the gab fests between four or five local amateurs who call themselves the "Needle Club." They gently needle each other on the air after the fashion of Groucho Marx.

Just as all hobbies tend to make "widows," so does amateur radio. But the radio widow at least knows where husband is—in the "radio shack" with the "cans" (head phones) glued to his ears.

Many husbands encourage their wives to get into the act: "Hey, Bertha, here's Bill, over in Honolulu. He wants a QSO with you."

Then, too, some amateurs are not above using their wives as a gimmick. They'll be working DX (distance)—CQ-ing all over the dial (come in any one) with no response. Then they'll ask the wife to CQ for them. Responses come in by the dozen.

"It's the universal feminine appeal," explains Fred Ebel.

(More about hams and amateur radio tomorrow.)